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WESTHAMPTON,

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T I M E O F S I C K N E S S

I N T H A T T O W N.

TUESDAY, 19th OCTOBER, 1802.

By VINSON GOULD,
Colleague Pastor of the Church in Southampton.

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WESTHAMPTON

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TIME OF KNOWLEDGE

IN THAT TOWN

THE TOWN OF WESTHAMPTON

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1888

S E R M O N.

AMOS, IV. 12.

And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

THE solemnity of these words ought to affect all our hearts. They come cloathed with authority, for they are the words of the living God. They therefore, claim our candid attention and serious improvement.

In this and preceding chapters, by the mouth of his prophet, God expostulates with the children of Israel on account of their idolatry, obstinacy and impenitence; and threatens them with his just judgments. He had separated them from the rest of mankind, and afforded them peculiar and endearing privileges. He received them into his family and nourished and brought them up as children. Of course, he had a claim to their best and constant services.

In regard to their civil government, they were under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness. The Lord was their king. He gave them an excellent system of laws well adapted to promote their national prosperity and private happiness. He was their defence and strong tower. On condition of their obedience, the Most High promised to be their protector when they should be invaded by enemies; and often, by an Almighty arm, were those enemies humbled in the dust before them. He gave them prosperity and success as a people, and poured down upon them the richest of his blessings.

But with these high and distinguishing privileges, both civil and religious, they were not satisfied. They murmured, became obstinate and rose in open rebellion. They refused to submit to the divine authority, and lightly esteemed the God of their salvation.—For their folly and wickedness, they were often reprov'd. On condition of returning to their allegiance, pardon was offered. Judgments the most terrible were threatened if they remained incorrigible. The messenger of God stood before them, holding in one hand the inviting book of mercy; and in the other, the stern decrees of justice. In the mild words of an affectionate parent, were they often importuned to forsake their sins. If this did not reclaim them, they were addressed in the solemn language of severity; and were compelled to hear the grave

grave denunciations of a righteous Judge. If mercies did not lead them to repentance, the sad reverse,—desolating judgments were sent upon them. By this variety of means, they were at times, partially reformed; but when calamities were removed, they soon relapsed into their former stupidity and rebellion. They proved themselves to be a stiff-necked and uncircumcised people in heart and ears; for they, from generation to generation, resisted the Holy Ghost. They persecuted the prophets of the Lord and slew those who shewed the coming of the Just One.

At length, the prophet Amos was raised up as a servant of the Lord. He plainly told them they were a disobedient and gainsaying people, and that they had, by their sins, wearied the patience of their divine Sovereign. For the Lord God had sworn by his holiness, that, lo, days of darkness and distress should come upon them. Accordingly he sent calamities to awaken them. Saith God, “I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; when your gardens, and vineyards, and your fig-trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them: Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence; your young men have I slain with the sword. I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me saith the Lord.” Thus did the Most High condescend to expostulate with them. He, by his prophets, stated facts to them and in the most tender and pathetic manner, invited their return.

To give them abundant evidence of his truth and munificence, he never failed to deal kindly with them when they repaired to him and revered his institutions. He caused their fields to yield in abundance and their flocks to multiply. Health and the rich enjoyments of life were bestowed upon them with a liberal hand. But these good things too often hardened them in impenitence.

The history of God’s dealings with the people of Israel and of their conduct in adversity and prosperity, affords us a striking lesson of instruction. Human nature is the same in every age, and God is the same forever. If moral defection and obstinate rebellion were predominant characteristics of that people, we may learn what men are, at the present day. After trying that nation with mercies and judgments, and proving the hardness of their hearts, if God saw it necessary to consign them over to destruction, we have indubitable evidence that it will be just and necessary to punish impenitent sinners in every age. The wicked shall not escape, when he calleth for their souls.

A large portion of the Israelites when the text was uttered, had become like stubble, fit for nothing but the devouring flame. They were unfruitful in good works, would not repent, but would persevere in wickedness. All the salutary and powerful means which God took to reclaim them, proved ineffectual. From his mercies, they encouraged themselves to grow more bold in sin. When the pestilence
wasted

wasted the lives of some, others, who escaped its ravages, refused to humble themselves before their Maker.

Having now used all the means which he thought expedient, having sent upon them blessings and calamities, and, by his servants, admonished them of their danger, and yet no thorough reformation being effected, he declareth in the text his awful determination. He was about to make them, at least a part of them, wretched like the miserable inhabitants of the cities of the plain. He speaketh unto them as if his purpose were fixed. They must fall before his power—must experience his holy indignation—must die—must come to judgment. “Therefore, *saieth he, thus will I do unto thee:*” *And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* As if he had said, I have waited long on thee and, in vain, have waited for thy return—Neither calls nor invitations, warnings nor threatnings, encouragements nor promises, have had their desired effect. To thee, has been presented the fairest prospect of temporal prosperity and future felicity. *Yet hast thou not returned unto me.* But thou hast hardened thyself in iniquity and spurned at the hand that has upheld thee. By thy repentance and return, I am to receive no praise from thy lips. No incense of gratitude ascends up to heaven from the altar of thy heart. Thy voice of prayer and adoration is not heard. Yet will I not be robbed of my glory—I will not lose my praise. Mine authority shall be asserted and my power made known. As a vessel of wrath, thou shalt be filled with my fury; for vengeance is in my heart. I will tread thee down in mine anger, and I will bring down thy strength to the earth. I can make the wrath of man to praise me, and glorify myself in his destruction. But awful as destruction is, dreadful as it must be, to meet an irreconciled God, terrible as are the thoughts of dying in a state of sin and of standing in the presence of thy final Judge—prepare for the event. Prepare for a solemn meeting with thy God.

In language of this nature, have sinners been addressed. The same language is applicable to all the impenitent; especially to those who have been called and awakened, but have relapsed into their former state of stupidity. Let such persons be reminded of that approaching hour when they must appear before the bar of justice, and receive an adjudication for eternity.

In further discoursing from the words of the text, we may contemplate the divine determination expressed—attend to the purport of the phrase, *prepare to meet thy God*—and show, briefly, what is implied in preparation for future glory.

In the first place, we may contemplate the divine determination in regard to man, *saieth God because I will do this unto thee.*

Without confining ourselves to the simple meaning of these words, as they stand in their connection, we may observe, that God will do that which is for his glory. He is a holy sovereign, and in all his providences and works, he will maintain his own dignity and supremacy. He is determined to be glorified by every event, and by the whole sys-

tem of intelligences. If his rational creatures will not cheerfully submit to his authority and willingly praise his name, he will honor himself, by bringing on them the terror of his majesty, and displaying the attribute of his justice. We may be assured he will vindicate his character, support his law and government, and be admired by all his saints, though transgressors be rejected and devoted to final perdition.

It is the divine determination in regard to man in the Christian world, that he have a state of protection—the means of grace—and calls of the gospel—that he have life and death placed before him—that he be at liberty to chuse or refuse—and that he be eventually treated according as he uses this liberty. To those under the light of the gospel, the Lord Jesus must be preached, and a way of escape from the demerit of sin. All who break off their iniquities by repentance and repair to Christ as the great Savior, shall be accepted—shall have, in the present world, peace of conscience and rejoicing in the Lord, and in the world to come, life everlasting. Those, who do not repent and believe in Christ, shall be monuments of his wrath, shall experience distress and pain, disappointment and rebuke here on earth, and all the anguish and horrors of hell in eternity. God is determined, that men shall be sensible of the rectitude of his government in the display of his mercy, in saving his dear children; and of his justice in the condemnation of impenitent sinners: so that every mouth shall be stopped, and no flesh glory in his presence.

God is determined that men, in this Christian land, shall have evidence, as far as his word and providences can furnish evidence, that he is possessed of every amiable perfection—that he is merciful, slow to anger, full of compassion and tenderness to all the meek and humble subjects of his kingdom. They shall have evidence, that God is terrible in majesty, mighty in power and just in his dealings towards the incorrigible; and that he can punish them in perfect consistency with his benevolence and holiness.

If any person doubt whether it be fit and just for the Most High to frown on the wicked, let him call to mind the wretchedness which the inhabitants of the old world experienced, the fiery storm, that descended on Sodom and Gomorrah, the frequent judgments sent upon the Israelites and Gentile nations and the unparalleled calamities of the Jews when their city and temple were, at last, destroyed, and they who escaped the famine and pestilence, were dispersed abroad in the earth. If these examples do not suffice, let him reflect on the recent distresses experienced in the large cities and in some smaller towns in our land. Let him *now* look abroad, and see what God is now doing before his eyes. Let him walk to the houses of his neighbors and behold the sorrow visible in their countenances—the helpless sick racked with pain and panting for breath—let him listen to the groans of the dying, and the sighs and lamentations of the afflicted. Let him survey the solemn funeral procession bearing the dead to the home of silence; and let him enter the grave yard and weep over the the tender infant

infant and sprightly youth, who have prematurely gone down to the congregation of the dead. Having now felt for other's woes, visited houses of distress, stood by the beds of languishing, noticed the pensive countenances of mourning friends, and seen the remains of the deceased deposited in the lonely tomb—let him not doubt but God may be just and still frown on men.

If it be right for God to exhibit his displeasure at sin, and cause pains to be endured in this world, we do not see but it will be right to punish sinners in the other world. He is forever the same. It was from eternity right, that distress should come upon the children of disobedience; and if God hath so ordered that sin be attended with bitter consequences in the present state, we may be assured it will be attended with tenfold more bitter consequences in the rewarding state. Sin is the same in its nature and tendency in both worlds; and is indissolubly connected with misery.

In his holy dispensations, God is determined to frown on some cities, towns and families, and cause them to drink the wormwood and the gall, till they have exhausted the cup of calamities; whilst, at the same time, others enjoy health and a rich profusion of his bounty. Of his purpose to chastise, you my hearers, must be sensible; for you have felt the rod. A dreadful cloud charged with divine indignation and replete with terror, hangs over this town and already is it bursting on your heads. To an uncommon degree, has sickness prevailed among you, and it still prevails. By a wasting and malignant disorder, a number of your beloved friends and intimate acquaintance, has been summoned into eternity.* The sick are numerous; deaths are multiplied beyond any former example in this town and disconsolate mourners walk about the streets. It is with you a solemn time. Your afflictions do not spring out of the ground, nor are the prevailing sickness and mortality to be imputed to accident. The Lord is in the midst of you with a mighty hand. What you have experienced and may experience is an effect from the great cause of all events. God hath determined to chastise this people, and to shew them his righteous anger.

It is not meant to be insinuated, that you, in this town, are more deserving of divine judgments than others. Your moral characters are not ascertained by external circumstances adverse or propitious. But of this be assured, the Most High doth not bring upon you more grievous calamities than you merit by your sins. He hath, heretofore, in
kindness

* Nineteen persons deceased in less than ten weeks, from August 10 to Oct. 15, and eight of them in six days. Many others were sick. The Epidemic, which was a putrid dysentery, attacked most of the people of the houses where it entered; and visited families that had not communicated with the diseased.

The town which is small containing by Census 756 inhabitants, had been remarkably healthy, in general, from its first settlement. The average of deaths from its incorporation had been about six to a year, and not more than two of them adults. Of those who died in this sickly season, thirteen were children, ten of them under five years of age. The other six were members of the church, and one of them in each space of ten years between twenty and eighty.

kindness and mercy passed before you; and in point of privilege, exalted you to heaven. From the infancy of the town, you have had the gospel preached to you in its power and purity by your Pastor now laboring in another part of the vineyard,† you have had line upon line and precept upon precept. God hath been pleased to afford the awakening influences of his spirit at several times. At no remote period, the attention of many of you was called up to the important concerns of your souls, and the solemn inquiry was made, *What you should do to be saved*. But what have been the effects? Some we would humbly hope, have been savingly benefited by securing an interest in Christ. But what can be said of many, especially, many youth who appeared serious, borne down under a sense of their guilt and solicitous to make their calling and election sure? Do they give evidence of a renewed heart? Are they now serious and pressing into the kingdom of heaven? Does sin sit heavy on their minds? Do they shun the company of the vain and gay; and when sinners entice do they refuse to consent? Or is the awful reverse true? Are they not as thoughtless and unaffected as ever—as much given to mirth and vanity as any of their rude companions? They have been called, but have they not refused? Let them be reminded, that their last estate is worse than the first and that they need tremble lest they have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. He hath afforded them the means of grace and awakened them by his spirit. And now perhaps, he hath determined to call them to an account. Let them, therefore, be in readiness for the event.

The Most High hath tried you as a people with mercies innumerable. He hath bestowed on you rich blessings spiritual and temporal. Have you rendered unto him according to his benefits? Have you been fruitful in love and abundant in good works? For divine goodness and compassion, have your hearts overflowed with gratitude? Have you become the humble disciples of the blessed Jesus? Or have you become hardened in ways of iniquity and callous to divine impressions? It seems, from what you now experience, that the Lord, for some reason, is greatly displeased, and is determined to send calamities upon you. He hath tried mercies, which, it appears have not led you to repentance. Judgments, in an awful manner, are now coming upon you; and he is bringing evils, which you cannot escape. *And because he doeth this, prepare to meet your God*. You will not consider these words as addressed to Israel alone. They are this day addressed to you. They come pointed directly at you. With the commanding authority of Jehovah, they give to you a solemn warning. *Prepare therefore to meet your God*. He hath determined ye shall see days of adversity. Let each one for himself prepare for what is coming. Ye, who are in the decline of life, under the pressure of years, bending over the grave, the admonition is to you. To you, shortly the wonders

† Reverend Mr. Hale was absent on a Mission in the District of Maine, during the distresses of his dear people in Westhampton.

ders of eternity will be unfolded. The gentle light of heaven, in all its glory, will shine into your minds ; or, the darkness of endless death will overwhelm you with its horrors. Soon are you to meet, not an earthly conqueror or prince, but your God. In a posture of readiness, be waiting for the approaching hour. Those of you, who are active and in the midst of your days, are also called upon to prepare to stand in the unveiled presence of the Redeemer. Ye are to receive these words as a message from above sent to you at this time for the very purpose of exciting you to prepare for another world. Set your houses in order. The warning is loud and solemn. The shafts of death are swiftly flying, and they may suddenly fix on you. Perhaps the determination is, *ye shall soon die and not live*. Youth and children, how like the voice of an angel, do these words sound in your ears ! Prepare, prepare, for God is coming in dreadful majesty. Do ye inquire *who* is coming—who that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ? It is the Great Eternal who will tread you, that are his enemies, in his anger and trample you in his fury. The mighty God is drawing near, prepare to meet him. He is on the way bearing the standard of his omnipotence before him. Behold your fellow youth falling into the grave in quick succession.—Be ready for his approach ; for if ye be overtaken on surprise, ye will be destroyed as were the people of the old world. Stand prepared by humble repentance ; or ye will be crushed by the hand of divine justice. *Consider this, lest ye be torn in pieces and there be none to deliver*. God is travelling towards you in the greatness of his strength. Of your age, may be seen among your neighbours and friends, the sick, the afflicted, the dying, and the dead. The young, as well as others, may and do fall victims to the king of terrors. *Therefore prepare to meet your God*. Perhaps it is determined this is the last discourse you will ever hear from this place—this the last meeting, till you meet your righteous Judge. Life is now peculiarly uncertain. Death is widely spreading destruction around and among you. It is a solemn time—a time to prepare for gloomy events. The call is pressing and alarming. Harken to the persuasive voice of heaven that your souls may live.

Impenitent sinners are all solicited to make a pause before their feet stumble upon the dark mountains. If they are unprepared, they will know what it is to fall into the hands of the living God. They will learn by fatal experience the force of his threatening when he saith, “ I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their hearts, and there will I devour them as a lion.

II. As was proposed, let us attend to the purport of the phrase, *prepare to meet thy God*.

It may be understood in several senses.

1. We will consider it as an ironical expression. Then it will be an address like the following : Guilty mortals, often warned and invited to return to your God, yet remaining in a state of rebellion, hear and tremble. Prepare for the miseries that are coming upon you.—Since ye reject the offers of pardon and will not listen to the voice of the

charmer, charming never so wisely—since ye despise the Redeemer and will not become his friends, since ye feel self sufficient, important and think your mountain stands strong, and since God hath determined ye shall see days of sorrow, endure distress, and, without repentance, shall find no peace in this nor in a coming world ; exert yourselves to the utmost to defeat my purposes. You pretend to great ability and strength. Make a thorough trial of your power. *Prepare to meet your God.* Bring the matter to a crisis. You have long resisted the divine authority ; and because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, your hearts are set in you to do evil. If you are so self-sufficient and haughty in heart as to defy my vengeance, you shall be tried. Be prepared to meet a holy God. If, with the bravery of infernal furies, you dare engage in contest with an Almighty Being, be prepared. Fortify yourselves for a meeting so near at hand. He who inhabiteth eternity is coming—shortly ye shall see whether ye are able to stand before him. The meeting will be decisive. Therefore prepare your weapons of defence, and for once exert your power. Resist the dreadful arm of Jehovah, if you are able, and prepare to sustain the shock of divine vengeance. Let your fellow sinners know what strength there is in man. Display your desperate courage and make an effort to ward off the thunderbolts of heaven. Swell your big hearts with the pride of your greatness and rush with unshaken resolution on the bosses of God's buckler. Your time to prepare for the combat is short. Be active and in readiness ; for the issue will show whether you or God must bow—whether you are to take the throne or He is there still to sit in judgment. If you are vanquished, you will be treated as unpardonable rebels. Your prison will be the abode of despair, and your punishment the fire that is never quenched. Thus God challenges you, who have not repented, to meet him. By your practice, you have been and are now challenging him. You have acted the part of enemies, you are his enemies at heart. Do not flatter yourselves you will succeed in your wicked ways ; for you will not be able to stand in judgment. Fling down the weapons of rebellion. Despair of success by resistance. Continue no longer in the deplorable state of sin ; but fly to Jesus for refuge and he will prove to you an all-sufficient Savior.

2. Prepare to meet God in his rebukes, and to endure affliction with christian fortitude and patience. In the world ye will have tribulation. Since ye cannot escape trials, learn to pass through them with humble resignation. The present is a state of distress and disappointment. Never was it designed for a high state of happiness.—Your purest joys are marred with sin and trouble. Were not a better state revealed in scripture, who would not sink into despair ! Who would wade through the calamities of life and not be fatigued with existence, were not peaceful mansions prepared in the kingdom of God ! But hope, if fixed on Jesus, like an anchor, secures the soul when tossed on the boisterous sea of life and makes eternity appear glorious. You must all experience pain and death ; but let patience have

have its perfect work. Go forward with submission, remembering that Christ was made perfect through suffering, and ye will be prepared to meet God in peace.

3. The phrase, *prepare to meet God*, may be considered as an exhortation to penitence. In the midst of divine threatenings, we often find calls to reformation. God declares he will do this, i. e. he will punish the incorrigible with everlasting destruction; yet those, who will prepare to meet him by turning from their sins, shall be graciously accepted. Therefore, prepare to meet him on his own terms—meet him on gospel ground—meet him as a reconciled God in Jesus Christ and be intitled to all the happiness of his saints. But, in order to this you observe there is a command to *prepare*.——This preparation,

III. Is the great and capital thing. You must all meet God, whatever be the state of your hearts. Saints and sinners must stand before the son of man. But none, except those who are *prepared*, will be justified. And how important is this! Who will dare to die, who dare to live—to live a moment in a state of sin?

Preparation to meet God, implies faith and repentance. All in state of nature are unprepared. A work of grace effected by the power of the holy spirit upon the soul, is necessary to salvation. *2 must be born again*. A new life must be begun in the soul accompanied with acts of holy obedience. This is the work of God. “For not by works of righteousness which ye have done, but according to his mercy, are ye saved, by the washing of regeneration and renewing the Holy Ghost.”

In order to divine acceptance, repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are indispensable. Evangelical repentance does not consist in the terrors of the law nor the fear of punishment; but in a holy mourning for sin as committed against God. The true penitent is in bitterness of soul that he has dishonored his merciful creator, and treated the holy saviour with neglect. It pains him to the heart, that he has risen up against the divine government, which now appears righteous and blessed. He is not anxious about his own salvation provided God can be glorified. He is humbled in the dust under a sense of his own ingratitude, guilt and vileness. He appears to himself the most sinful, unworthy and loathsome wretch in all the creation of God and admires, that he has not long since been consigned over to wrath. His own works sink down into insignificance, and appear no better than filthy rags. He despairs of justification by the deeds of the law and relies solely on the merits of Christ. With perfect pleasure he contemplates the divine character and the glorious plan of redemption by the saviour. If he looks into himself he discovers nothing but most filthy pollution. In God he sees every amiable perfection. The amazing contrast between the divine purity and holiness; and his depraved heart brings him to the feet of Jesus. He exalts the Lord and abases himself. Every thing in himself is odious. Every thing God is glorious. The law is just and Christ is altogether lovely. He exercises a lively faith in the saviour and places in him pleasing confidence.

dence. On his mercy, he unreservedly casts himself—rejoices in his love and fullness—and sweetly reclines on his promises. To him Christ is every thing—his only and his blessed portion. Like the devout Psalmist, he can say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.*

Exercises of this kind embrace true repentance and saving faith, without which no one is prepared for glory above. Of this you are, no doubt, sensible; for you have been taught it, as often as you have read your bibles. You know, at least speculatively, that an abhorrence of sin, a love of holiness and a delight in the divine government and plan of salvation by Jesus, are necessary to eternal life. To prepare for union with the holy society of heaven, sinners have clear evidence, that they must humble themselves before their Maker, must come to Christ, dependant creatures, poor and needy, empty of themselves, deploring the vileness of their affections, and the hardness of their hearts. They *know* enough to prepare to meet God, to praise and pray, if their hearts were right. Their most damning sin is not the sin of ignorance. It is the sin of unbelief. They will not believe the words of truth, though clothed with all the authority of God. After they have heard the command, this day, coming from the mouth of the Lord, it is to be feared that some of them will return home and not obey. The truth of it is, they do not believe the Most High is pronouncing these awful words in their ears, *prepare to meet thy God.* They do not intend to meet him. They hope never to draw near the holiness of his majesty. The veil of unbelief conceals from them the approaching God, and their own danger. Thence they take occasion to continue in impenitence, and procrastinate preparation for eternity. For the truth of this, the appeal is made to you—to you directly who have no interest in Christ. Have you come to a fixed resolution to prepare to meet your God? Do you mean to begin this great work this day—this very day? Are you determined to seek first the kingdom of God? Do you design now and all your days to plead for the pardon of your sins and to live devoted to the saviour? Have you come to this conclusion? If we could look into your hearts as God doth, probably we should find you have no such determination. As soon as you believe it necessary, you, no doubt, mean to prepare. But it must be *your* time and not God's time, which is now. Let it be asked, do you intend to kneel before your Maker before you retire to rest this evening and beg for mercy? We have reason to conclude that some of you have never once prayed in the course of your lives, nor even attempted it. Under various pretences, you have excused yourselves from this duty. But the fact is, you do not love prayer; if you did, your excuses by which you attempt to quiet conscience, would vanish in a moment.—How gloomy and mournful is your state, while you live without prayer and God in the world! How forbidding the scenes that will soon open to your astonished mind! If like the all-seeing eye, we could survey futurity, we might see the grim messenger death walking by your side and the fatal commission executed. And
might

might we not see you trembling before the bar of divine justice, and, being tried, found guilty, leaving the seat of judgment, to lie down in eternal anguish of soul? It is to be feared that some of you, whom God now calls, will never repent, but will plunge into the other world unprepared. Your time is short at the longest. Instances of mortality are numerous and *you or you* may be the subject of the next funeral. *Prepare then to meet your God.*

In many ways are persons called to meet God. They must meet him in his holy providences—in his mercies and frowns—in affliction and prosperity—in sickness and in health—in death and (O, tremendous thought,) in judgment. To meet God at last, how important, passing all conception! The hour will come with inexpressible solemnity. Many circumstances will conspire to render it solemn. The vast congregation composed of holy and sinning angels, of saints and sinners, will make it solemn. The horrid works of darkness then disclosed to the view of all intelligences, will make it solemn. In heaven and hell will reign an awful solemnity, when Christ the Judge shall pronounce the unalterable sentence on the just and on the unjust. The meeting, therefore, for which we are commanded to prepare, will be solemn.

To conclude, be solicited to seek God while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, “To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.” To-morrow it may be too late. Those of you, who defer the momentous concerns of the soul, to a more convenient season, will, it is to be feared, be left *to eat the fruit of your own ways and be filled with your own devices.* You are not far from the grave, and may, at an unexpected moment, be launched into eternity. Your state, ye unconverted sinners, is dreadfully alarming. Behold the gulph of woe before you, opening to receive you. Behold the angel of death behind you with his glittering sword drawn to cut you asunder. In this situation, can you rest secure, and trifle with your souls? Will not the thunders of God’s broken law, awaken you from cold indifference? Will you not be melted into repentance by the gentle voice of the merciful Redeemer now inviting you to the arms of his love? Will you not be excited to acts of adoration by the joy and praises of the saints? Will you remain unmoved by all the melody of heaven? Stupidity in the extreme!—If then ye are determined to perish in sin, remember you yourselves must bear the consequences. It shall not be said you never had a call to repent and prepare to meet your God. You are called by the distressing calamities with which this town is now visited. The great God calls you with the solicitude of a parent. *Unto you, O man, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* Let none of you say in the coming judgment ye were never called to repent, nor warned of your state and danger. If any of you die with the prevailing epidemic and loose your souls, when you come to take a final departure from the blessed God, the dear Redeemer, the holy angels and the saints—when you are cut off from every enjoyment and are turned down, to the dark and dismal prison of despair, do not plead

plead you never heard of that place of torment. Do not plead you were never commanded to prepare to meet God in the peaceful mansions of glory. Do not say, that if you had been faithfully warned, you should have inherited an eternity of happiness and shunned an eternity of misery. Such pleas will be unavailing; for they are false. You will remember forever, that you were called and intreated to embrace the Lord Jesus; but you refused. Your sin will return on yourselves, and by its accumulating weight, it will crush you down to the lowest hell. Now reflect who among you can endure the thought of endless perdition? Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can inhabit everlasting burnings? Is there any one present who will meet his God unprepared? Any one who is to inherit eternal woe? In what part of this house, on what seat does such an one sit? O if that person could be pointed out to us, how would our hearts bleed over him! How would our eyes dissolve with tears! An end so dreadful may we all escape. Let us not enter on our eternal state unprepared. Forbid it conscience. Forbid it, O our souls. Forbid it heaven. Most gracious God, how insupportable thy wrath! How irreparable the loss of thine ineffable glory. In mercy, prepare us to meet, in thee, an approving Judge. For the preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.



